



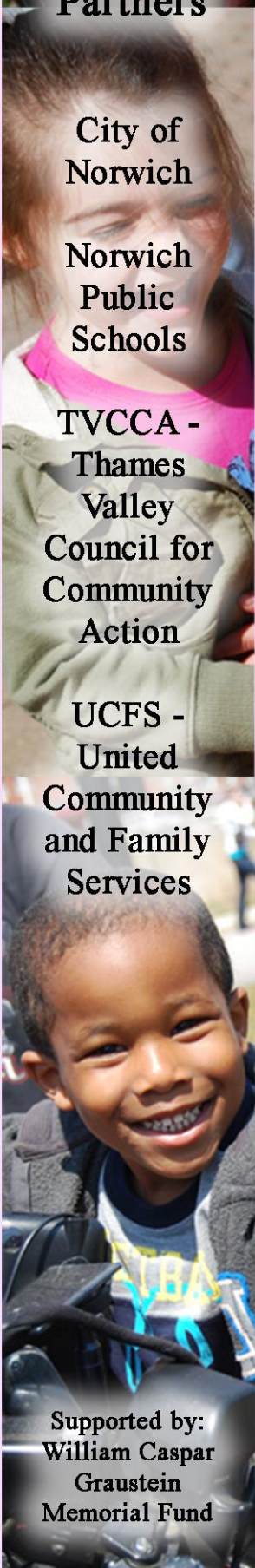
Partners

City of
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Public
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TVCCA -
Thames
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Council for
Community
Action

UCFS -
United
Community
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Supported by:
William Caspar
Graustein
Memorial Fund

Testimony for March 3rd 2015

H. B. No 6824 Community Plans for Early Childhood

Senator Bye, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee

I am writing in strong support of maintaining funding for **Community Plans for Early Childhood** and **Parent Leadership Programs**. The line items are both being eliminated entirely from the Governor's budget. The Norwich community currently receives a total of \$80,000 for our Discovery work and our Parent Leadership programming. This grant funding leverages an additional \$83,880 dollars to provide services to Norwich families and continue the community work of Discovery.

As such, on behalf of the Children First Norwich/School Readiness Council (CFN/SRC), I am requesting your support as a co-signor to HB 6004, which strengthens the link between Office of Early Childhood and local collaborative (CFN) by honoring a generous offer from the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund's match of \$800,000 and \$200,000 from the Children's Fund of Connecticut. Help keep the momentum going.

Please support keeping the line item for **Community Plans for Early Childhood** in the budget and consider co-signing HB 6004. (If this Bill gets combined with another - I will pass along this info. <http://cga.ct.gov/2015/TOB/H/2015HB-06004-R00-HB.htm>)

The Parent Leadership Fund, which is also being eliminated, supports 25 organizations across the Connecticut to train 66 cohorts of parents yearly. The \$500,000 state funding for the Parent Trust Fund is matched, again by William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund in the amount of \$250,000. This too, is a remarkably successful collaboration. Without funding from all involved, we fear that early childhood plans will falter and the work to secure the success of these initiatives will fail.

What does CFN/SR Council do?

CFN/SR Council is a collaborative of many agencies, organizations and individuals in Norwich dedicated to improving life outcomes for young children and their families. We are supported through both private organizations (Graustein Memorial Fund, local banks, and philanthropic groups) and public funding (School Readiness) and the above named State initiatives. Locally we are lead by the Norwich Public Schools, the City of Norwich, United Community and Family Services (UCFS), and Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA).

80 Broadway, Norwich, CT 06360

Sherry Bryant Tel. 860-823-3782 - Fax 860-823-3793

- E-mail sbryant@cityofnorwich.org

Anne Jerome Tel. 860-859-5015 EXT 149 - Fax 860-823-4220

- E-mail ajerome@norwichpublicschools.org

The CFN/SR Council isn't just about educating young children. It's also about:

- Food security: CFN/SR. Has brought the United Way Mobile Food Pantry to one of our elementary schools. CFN/SR. Has instigated a weekend food backpack program so children can have food over the weekend and come to school ready to learn. We have put on a "Cooking Matters" class with collaboration from UCONN so families can learn how to cook nutritious yet inexpensive meals. We are working with local grocery stores to help educate families about nutritious foods. We started the Weekend food backpack program so children will not go hungry over the weekend.
- Access to health care services including behavioral health, mental health, dental health, well-child visits
- Affordable housing
- Employment opportunities
- Education/training opportunities: We are working with early care providers to help programs be ready for the new professional standards created by the Office of Early Childhood. We work with a local business to provide training for youth entering the work force.
- Community safety: CFN/SR is working with the Safe Routes to Schools program to help make sure our children can walk or bike to school.
- And most importantly: Creating a comprehensive and integrated data system to measure outcomes in order to determine program effectiveness and to inform community planning and policy for children and families.

In short, the mission of the Children First Norwich/School Readiness Council is to engage families, schools, and community to improve the life outcomes for young children.

The support Norwich receives from the State and the Graustein Memorial Fund allows us to secure other funds to support and implement the work of the Council. Please support keeping the line item for **Community Plans for Early Childhood** in the budget and co-signing HB6004. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Children First Norwich / School Readiness Council

Sherry Bryant

Sherry Bryant, Coordinator
Children First Norwich/School Readiness Council/Parent Leadership Programs
80 Broadway
Norwich, CT 06360
sbryant@cityofnorwich.org
860-823-3782